



June, 2006

**Special points of interest:**

- Comments from Parole Board Chairman Maureen Walsh
- Ex-offender Writes Book, Reforms in Prison
- RRC Staff Reach Out to Inmates

## Parole Board Central Office Finds New Home in Natick

The Massachusetts Parole Board's central office relocated this month to a permanent facility in Medfield after spending three years at a temporary site on the grounds of the former Medfield State Hospital. The move is a big step forward for the agency, uniting most administrative and managerial staff under one roof and allowing for centralized operations.

The search for a new location began more than a year ago, when the agency issued a Request for Proposals [RFP] for a site on

the Massachusetts Turnpike/I-495 belt.



A sign marks the Massachusetts Parole Board's new central office location on Mercer Road in Natick

The RFP yielded responses from three sites in Marlboro, Milford, and Natick. After weighing the pros and cons of each site, senior staff determined

that a roughly 20,000 square-foot facility in Natick best suited the agency's needs. The building, formerly occupied by the ad agency, ProMedia, Inc., is located across from the Natick Mall and is accessible from major traffic routes such as Rt. 9, the Massachusetts Turnpike, and Interstate 495.

The agency spent 15 months on the project, between drafting the RFP, looking at sites, and meeting with architects to plan renovations to tailor the building to the *(continued on pg. 4)*

## Parole Staff Attend Conference for Women in Law Enforcement

There is still a need for more women, and better treatment for those women, in the field of law enforcement.

This was one of the messages conveyed at the third annual Women's Law Enforcement Conference attended by Parole Board staff on Friday, June 16.

The conference took place in Harvard Business School's Burden Hall, and was sponsored by the Massachusetts Association of Women in

Law Enforcement [MAWLE].

About a third of the seats in the 850-seat capacity lecture hall were filled. "Our goal is to fill this room," said MAWLE Executive Director Pamela Besold. Keynote speaker Margaret H. Marshall, the first female Chief Justice in the history of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts advised that leaders are made, not born. "Leadership is less about raw

ability than developing and using leadership skills," she said. "Successful people push in the direction of their passion," she noted.

Women leaders must learn to tolerate the spotlight and take credit when deserved. Women must also "learn to negotiate the minefield of harmful stereotypes," to make alliances with other women, and to always put family first, she said.

## Chairman's Column

*By Parole Board Chairman Maureen Walsh*

For this newsletter, I wanted to take the opportunity to introduce some of our new employees as well as to recognize some of our staff who were recently promoted.

The Victim Services Unit welcomes two new victim services coordinators and a promotion to Assistant Director of Victim Services, Chris Daly, who was a victim service advocate for over ten years at the Bristol County District Attorney's Office and is now at the Region 8 Parole Office in New Bedford. He replaces Janice Dean, who was recently promoted to Assistant Director of the Victim Services Unit. Also, we are happy to report that Erin Farrell recently came on board as a victim service coordinator and she will be working in the Natick office. Erin also has prior experience working with victims, as she was a former victim witness advocate for the Norfolk County District Attorney's Office.

Next, the Transitional Services Unit has hired two additional deputies to assist Chief of Transitional Services Marcia Curtin in her daily activities. First, we are happy to report that Lynn Ferraris, who has been working for the Agency in many different capacities, has been promoted to Deputy of Transitional Services. Also, Valerie Vernon joins us as a Deputy concentrating on the Lifer Unit, as well as training and staff development. Valerie was previously working at the Massachusetts Department of Correction and also worked in private industry before joining us at Parole.

The Field Services Unit is adding several individuals to their staff to become Field Parole Officers. The new officers are currently in training with Policy and Training Coordinator Paul Gallagher and others. Rick Valenti, a North Attleboro resident, comes to us after nine years with the Department of Youth Services Warrant Unit, and more than a year as a parole officer in the Suffolk County House of Correction.

Mary Aguilar was an Assistant Deputy of Classification at the Plymouth County House of Correction, where she held several positions for eighteen years. Mary hails from Plymouth.

Next, Kevin Devlin was a Department of Correction employee for seventeen years and is looking forward to transitioning into the role of field officer. Kevin has a background in investigation cases, case work, and security.

Andy Vignali, who recently returned to the Agency, was a transitional parole officer at the Suffolk County House of Correction. Andy lives in Attleboro, Massachusetts.

Anthony Scopa has been working for the Parole Board for approximately seven years in the Transitional Service Unit. He has worked at many state and county institutions as a transitional parole officer and has prior experience with the Department of Youth Services.

Mark Dasneves has worked for Parole for the past five years and, like Anthony, has worked in several of the state and county facilities. Mark was in the United States Army and continues to be enlisted in the Army Reserve.

Daniel Polak is a former Ware Police Officer, having worked for that Department for nine years. He also held various positions in western Massachusetts, including security at Barnes Air National Guard Base. Jeff Scott was a former transitional parole officer for two years before joining the ranks of the Belchertown Police Department. Jeff served as the Sex Offender Registry Board liaison for the department, and served as an EMT instructor. His thesis for his master's degree in criminal justice was about parole, recidivism, and the Intensive Parole for Sex Offender [IPSO] program.

**New employees  
have recently  
joined the Victim  
Services Unit,  
Transitional  
Services Unit,  
and Field  
Services Unit.**

## ***Ex-offender Strives for Self-Improvement, Writes Book on Christianity***

It's been exactly one year since Toribio Colón was released from prison after spending seven-and-a-half years incarcerated for a drug trafficking charge.

When he walked through the doors of the Regional Reentry Center in Lawrence, Mr. Colón knew he would never repeat the mistake that got him into prison. No matter how financially strapped he gets, or how seductive the easy money may appear, it will never be worth it, he said.

Mr. Colón originally from Puerto Rico, went to prison after he agreed to help traffic drugs from New York to Massachusetts. At the time, Mr. Colón, his wife, and two young daughters, were having financial difficulties. Mr. Colón furniture store was threatened by competing businesses and he was anxiously looking for other jobs and ways to bring in extra income.

Several times, he was approached by friends asking him to help move drugs. "My friends said you have problems, you're not making any money. Here's an opportunity to make \$1,000 in one week," he remembered. After refusing repeatedly, Mr. Colón gave in. "When I said yes, I said yes to prison at the same time. It was a very bad mistake that I had to pay a serious price for," he said.

On the day of his release, Mr. Colón agreed to be taken by



Toribio Colón poses for a picture at the Lawrence Regional Reentry Center on the day of his release from prison after serving 7 1/2 years on a drug trafficking charge.

Correctional Officers to the Regional Reentry Center in Lawrence. Located at the Lawrence [Region 6] Parole Office, the center provides ex-offenders with assistance in making a smooth transition from prison back into the community.

Offenders who choose to go to the RRC are transported on the day of release by Department of Correction officers. After the first visit, ex-offenders can return to the RRC as many times as they need.

Mr. Colón was fortunate enough to maintain good relations with his family while incarcerated, and moved back in with them when he got out of prison. He got a job as a waiter at the Concord Inn, where he works six days a week.

He has visited the RRC twice since his release, and gotten to know Reentry Supervisor Steve Kelly and Reentry Officer Ann Clegg.

Although he doesn't need help

finding housing and employment, key services provided at the RRC, Mr. Colón returns to the center for suggestions from Ms. Clegg and Mr. Kelly for opportunities to network with inmates and ex-offenders, particularly former addicts. Mr. Colón believes that a rehabilitated offender can make a powerful impression on inmates and ex-offenders in need of guidance. "I know how people think who have been in prison. Don't talk down to the person. Speak to him in a way that he can see you want to do something good for him."

At the start of his own prison term, Mr. Colón was angry at himself for his actions and wanted to make drastic changes in his life. "I wanted to be another person when I got out," he said. Before he saved enough money to buy a television for his cell, Mr. Colón bought a typewriter. *(continued on pg. 6)*





Parole Board Program Coordinator Stephanie Coughlin represents the food preparation company, Snap Chef, at a Parole Board-sponsored job fair in Brockton, while James Morse, a parolee, networks for a job. Mr. Morse lives in a boarding house and is looking for work in construction. The job fair took place this month at the Mt. Moriah Baptist Church.

*(story on pg. 5)*

## Making Inroads: Parole Staff Spread Word of RRC to Prisons

**"It's a unique opportunity to have contact with our target group,"**  
*- Reentry Supervisor Mike Bird, on making presentations at correctional facilities about the Regional Reentry Centers [RRC's]*

In an effort to intervene with inmates before they leave prison, Worcester Reentry Supervisor Mike Bird and Lawrence Reentry Supervisor Steve Kelly are visiting state correctional facilities to provide information and answer questions about the Massachusetts Parole Board's Regional Reentry Centers [RRC's].

"It's a unique opportunity to have direct contact with our target group," said Mr. Bird, who has spoken to groups of up to 60 inmates within six months of release at the North Central Correctional Institution at Gardner [NCCI/Gardner] and MCI-Shirley. Mr. Kelly presented to a group of around 50 inmates at the Massachusetts Treatment Center in Bridgewater.

The presentations respond to a need for more direct communications between the agency's eight RRC's and inmates awaiting release at state institutions. After two trips to Gardner, Mr. Bird found that inmates are still unclear on what the RRC's have to offer. "We thought our information was out there. It turns out the inmates did not have the full information about it," said Mr. Bird. "The response has been overwhelming," he added.

Inmates were unclear about the services available at the RRC, the amount of time they were expected to stay, and who could

pick them up when they finished. More importantly, inmates viewed the RRC's with distrust, sometimes not realizing the centers were created for their own benefit.

The response to the presentations has been so positive that the Parole Board and the Department of Correction have considered using the presentations statewide.

The RRC's opened in October, 2004. Staff at the RRC's assist ex-offenders in taking care of basic needs, finding transitional and permanent housing, finding employment, and accessing mental and physical healthcare. The centers operate from the agency's eight existing parole officers in Mattapan, Quincy, Brockton, New Bedford, Framingham, Lawrence, Worcester, and Springfield.

The state's objective in opening the centers is to improve public safety by assisting ex-offenders in making a more successful transition from prison to the community.

Studies have shown that the need to provide inmates with services and counseling is urgent during the first 72 hours after release, when the risk to recidivate is high. But research has also shown that reentry counseling in the months leading up to

release make a smooth transition into the community more likely.

By visiting the correctional facilities, RRC staff give inmates a preview of the challenges that await them. The hope is that inmates will have started the process to obtain ID and complete a resume by the time they arrive at the RRC, shortening delays to securing a bank account, housing, and a job.

At the Massachusetts Treatment Center, Mr. Kelly fielded questions from a group of about 50 inmates, all sex offenders.

Since making the presentations, Mr. Kelly has received and responded to letters from inmates with additional questions. "There's no doubt they will be more likely to come to the RRC," he said. "We will be able to see more sex offenders by doing this and help the ones that need help," he said.

## Parole Board finds permanent Central Office location (continued from pg. 1)

...needs of the parole board and its support staff.

Benefits of the new facility include expanded victim access at hearings, professional conference and training rooms, a secure, standalone environment, and complete, centralized control over operations.

"Faxes, phone conferences and emails can only do so much," said Parole Board Executive Director Donald Giancioppo, referring to the scattered nature of contact between managerial staff prior to the move.

"All the senior division and unit managers contributed" to the design process, said

Mr. Giancioppo. "Also, input from victims and the public over the years had a great impact."

Working with the architects, staff drew on their experience from the site on Worwood Street in Boston, where the Parole Board was housed for ten years before moving to Medfield. "We used our experience from the Boston site combined with our exposure to other state and county facility designs," said Mr. Giancioppo.

A central office for the Massachusetts Parole Board requires certain basics, including at least one

room for training, a large room dedicated to storing past and present parolee records, conference rooms, a hearing room, and about 60 work spaces for managerial and administrative staff.

Cubicles were knocked down on one half of the first floor to make way for a records room and training room. Now the majority of cubicles and offices are located in the other half of the building, which underwent minimal renovations.

**Benefits of the new Parole Board central office facility include expanded victim access at hearings, professional conference and training rooms, and a secure standalone environment.**

## Offender Job Fair Yields Modest, But Meaningful, Achievements

More than 100 ex-offenders and parolees gathered in the basement of the Mt. Moriah Baptist Church in Brockton this month, eagerly networking with employees and recruiters in hopes of finding work.

The job fair was a joint effort between the Brockton Career Center, the Massachusetts Parole Board, the U.S. Department of Probation, the Division of Career Services, and Mt. Moriah Baptist Church. Studies have shown that having a job will keep ex-offenders motivated and out of trouble. Not having a job makes it more likely they will slip back into substance abuse, depression, and crime.

"If you didn't get a job and you think this is the end of the road, no it isn't. There are plenty of resources out there," Parole Board Director of Reemploy-

ment David Sullivan told offenders at the morning event. Mr. Sullivan pointed to the resources available at the Brockton Regional Reentry Center and the Brockton Career Center.

About ten tables were lined up around the room, and job-seekers moved from table to table, shaking hands and giving resumes to representatives from the United Union of Roofers, Home Depot, the carpenters union, Speedee Oil Change & Tune-Up, Lens Crafters, Snap Chef, and the United States Air Force.

About 14 offenders found jobs as a result of the job fair, according to staff at Mt. Moriah. Ten were hired by the temporary food prep agency, Snap Chef, for a salary of \$8-\$12 per hour. Four were hired by various Speedee Oil Change locations.

The Brockton job fair came on the heels of similar events in Boston, Springfield, and Quincy this spring, aimed at providing a forum for offenders to meet employers who are willing to hire them. Parole and career center staff are planning two more job fairs in the coming months in Boston and New Bedford.

"All together, we are hoping to have been part of five job fairs before the end of the year," said Mr. Sullivan.

The job fairs reflect cooperation among multiple agencies. For example, three career centers, one of them privately operated, came together to plan the job fair at the Quincy Career Center. "Bringing three different career centers together, one being

(continued on pg. 6)

**Massachusetts Parole  
Board  
12 Mercer Road  
Natick, MA. 01760  
Phone: 508-650-4500  
Email: [anna.kivlan@state.ma.us](mailto:anna.kivlan@state.ma.us)**



### ***Ex-Offender writes book on Christianity***

*(continued from pg. 3)*

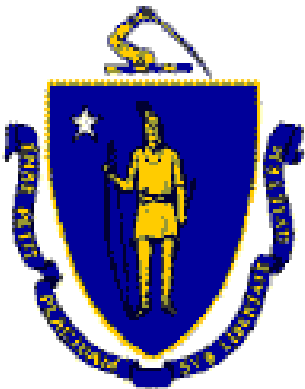
Using the writing experience he gained as a reporter in Puerto Rico, he wrote a book about Christianity, which he self published through the Indiana-based company, AuthorHouse.

The book is entitled *Christianismo para Todos*, or *Christianity for All*, and is available in Spanish, with an English version in production. The philosophy of the book is in line with Mr. Colón's belief in the importance of personal responsibility, advising that faith will only come to those who are willing to work for it. "You need to be an angel for yourself and take responsibility," he said.

Information about the book in Spanish is available at the following link:

<http://www.authorhouse.com/BookStore/ItemDetail~bookid~8095.a.spx>

*The Massachusetts Parole Board* is an agency within the Executive Office of Public Safety responsible for identifying parole eligible offenders and conducting release decisions to determine if an offender is an appropriate candidate for parole supervision. Such offenders are allowed to serve the remainder of their sentence in the community under a strict set of conditions and supervision by a parole officer. Because the agency's vision must include long-range community safety, paroled offenders must adhere to a tailored intervention program addressing their needs for substance abuse recovery, education, and employment.



### **Job fair success relies on interagency cooperation**

*(continued from pg. 5)*

...[privately] run, is hardly ever done. So we are very proud of the success of this," said Mr. Sullivan.

Other agencies that helped to plan the job fairs include the U.S Department of Probation, the Hampden County Sheriff's Department, the Division of Career Services, the Division of Apprenticeship Training, and the Massachu-

setts Rehabilitation Commission.



Parole Board Director of Reemployment David Sullivan speaks to a group of inmates at a job fair in Brockton this month.